Let Safety Be Your Constant Companion

Keep the

Never

Wild in Wildlife!

Javelina are wild and can be dangerous...

Feed Javelina!

Big Bend is unfamiliar country to most visitors yet it need not be dangerous. Whether hiking the highcountry, rafting the Rio Grande, observing wildlife, or simply driving the scenic roads of this wilderness park, let safety be your constant companion. Spend a moment reviewing these common safety concerns so that you may have an enjoyable visit.

Driving

Many accidental deaths in Big Bend result from car accidents. While driving is a great way to see the park, it can also be dangerous, particularly if you are tired or are going too fast. Drive within the speed limit, 45 mph maximum in the park, and watch for javelina, deer, and

rabbits grazing along road shoulders, especially at night. Seat belts are required at all times. Remember, too, that you share the road with bicyclists and pedestrians. Some park roads, such as the road into the Chisos Mountains Basin, are steep and winding and require extra caution. The Basin Road is not recommended for RVs over 24 feet or trailers over 20 feet. Finally, always select a designated driver before drinking alcoholic beverages.

Heat

Desert heat can kill you. Carry plenty of water (at least one gallon per person, per day) and wear a hat, long pants, long-sleeved shirt, and sun screen when hiking. Springs are unreliable and often dry up for a portion of the year, despite what maps indicate. Avoid hiking during mid-day in summer; travel as wild animals do, in the early morning or late evening hours rather than during the heat of the day.

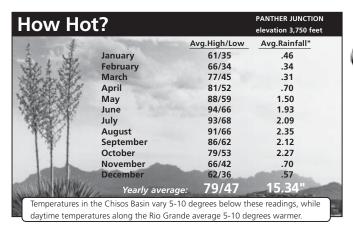
Mountain Lions

Big Bend is mountain lion country, es-

pecially the Chisos Mountains. While lion attacks are rare, three have occurred in the last 10 years. Should you encounter an aggressive mountain lion, hold your ground, wave your arms, throw stones, and shout. Never run. Keep groups together and consider hiking elsewhere with young children if you come across a special mountain lion warning sign posted at a trailhead.

Desert Wildlife

Black bears, javelinas, skunks, coyotes, and raccoons frequent Big Bend's campgrounds. Although they sometimes appear tame, all of the animals in the park are wild, and could pose a threat to your health and safety if you attempt to approach or feed them. Never feed any of Big Bend's wildlife. To prevent these creatures from becoming habituated to people, store all food, coolers, cooking utensils, and toiletries in a hard-sided vehicle, preferably in the trunk of your car. Food storage lockers are available for hikers and campers in the Chisos Mountains. Dispose of garbage properly. At the Chisos Basin Campground, throw away garbage in the special bear- proof dumpsters and trash cans provided. Remember to report all bear or lion sightings to a ranger.



Hiking

Exploring this desert and mountain country on foot requires both mental and physical preparation. Trails vary from well maintained in the Chisos to primitive and barely visible in the desert. Plan hikes within your ability. Take along a map and compass and know how to use

them. Flash floods may occur following thunderstorms so avoid narrow canyons or dry washes. Stay low and avoid ridges during thunderstorms. Carry a flashlight and a first aid kit. Let someone know where you're going and when you expect to return. If you get hurt or lost, stay in one place to conserve water and energy. Signal for help; three blasts on a whistle is a well-recognized distress call. In remote areas, a large "X" marked on the ground by any means visible from the air will signify that help is needed. Carry a signal mirror. Remember to obtain a free backcountry use permit before heading out overnight.

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Fire danger is always an important safety consideration in Big Bend. Wood or ground fires are not permitted in the park, and you must exercise caution in the use of gas stoves, charcoal grills, and cigarettes. Big Bend has experienced drought conditions in the past several years and some restrictions may apply to the use of these heat sources. Check with a ranger for the latest information about fire safety in the park.

Swimming

Hot weather makes the muddy Rio Grande look very inviting, but swimming is not recommended.

Water borne micro- organisms and other waste materials can occur in the river and cause serious illness. The river can be hazardous, even in calm-looking water. Strong undercurrents, deep holes, and shallow areas with sharp rocks and large tree limbs are common and make the Rio Grande unsafe for swimming. If you do choose to swim, wear a life jacket and avoid alcohol.

Poisonous Animals

Regulations are strictly enforced!

Venomous snakes, scorpions, spiders, and centipedes are all active during the warmer months. Inspect shoes and sleeping bags or bedding before use and always carry a flashlight at night. While snake bites are rare, they usually occur below the knee or elbow. Pay attention to where you walk and place your hands.

Big Bend truly is wild country. In fact, many people visit precisely because it is so remote and rugged. But remember, as you enjoy the splendor of this great wilderness area, to make safety a priority. By giving forethought to your actions you can have a safe, exciting, and rewarding vacation in Big Bend National Park.

